

## AFRL provides technology for special operators

*by Grace Janiszewski, Sensors Directorate*

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — Air Force special operators, whose missions depend, in part, on the heavy equipment they carry into battle, are counting on the Air Force Research Laboratory's Sensors Directorate to lighten their load.

"I carry at least 75 to 140 pounds of equipment when dropped into a forward deployed location," said Staff Sgt. Alan of the 720th Special Tactics Group at Hurlburt Field, Fla. "That doesn't include food or water."

Alan was one of a group of action officers from Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) and AFRL who presented an overview on Special Operations as it relates to today's war on terrorism, to the directorate's scientists and engineers.

Alan discussed his limitations regarding line of site, range and integration technology and the weight burden of today's systems.

"We rely on engineers, like those who work here, to combine these systems and lighten our load," he said.

In this spirit, engineers in the Sensors Directorate discussed emerging technologies that may have immediate application to the warfighter.

"Common situational awareness, electronic warfare, targeting and attack, as well as navigational aids are all areas of direct impact for research going on in the Sensors Directorate," said Walt Harrington, the facilitator of the meeting. "We have a legacy to meet the immediate needs of the warfighter, and will continue to produce field-ready options in the shortest possible period of time."

Maj. Mark W. Hornbostel, AFSOC liaison to Aeronautical Systems Center and a member of Special Operations Forces since 1987, said there has always been a critical need for forces uniquely organized, trained, and equipped to operate beyond the capability of conventional forces.

Keeping those forces equipped and ready is what AFRL scientists bring to the fight, according to Dr. William M. Brown, chief scientist at the Sensors Directorate.

"All three speakers demonstrated how warfighters and technology developers work together to make a difference," he said. "The Sensors Directorate led the way in establishing precise, smart weapons systems. More broadly, the scientists and engineers of AFRL are the guardians of the Air Force's keystone strategy of technological superiority." @